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purchased it from the Russian Government for £100,000. In early days the Monastery of Mount Sinai was under the jurisdiction sometimes of Jerusalem and sometimes of Alexandria. A synod of 1782, however, formally recognized its complete independence, although the Archbishop is always consecrated by the Patriarch of Jerusalem. He lives in Cairo. The monastery has a number of daughter-houses here and there in the world of Orthodoxy. One of them flourished for two hundred years in the Island of Crete and produced some famous men, among them Cyril Lucar. The Archbishop of Sinai has no lay flock, and apart from its sacred association and interesting history the fact that the small body of monks under his jurisdiction constitutes an independent Church on the same footing in that respect as, for example, the immense Church of Russia with its many million adherents, gives it a unique interest.

But Orthodoxy has innumerable monasteries and even the briefest account cannot omit mention of the ancient religious houses of Judaea and Cyprus or of the romantic monasteries of which Curzon wrote, some of which, as at Metéora, are perched on the top of cliffs so inaccessible that the visitor is drawn up by a rope.

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Russia has its famous monastery of the Holy Trinity near Moscow with its fortified walls which has played an important part in Russian history. It was here that Dmitry of the Don took counsel with St. Sergius before sallying forth to his great fight with the Tartars, and here was the rallying centre of Russian patriotism under Minin the butcher and Pozharsky the Prince, when the Poles had taken Moscow at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Further south is the ancient fourfold monastery of Kiev with its catacombs, which is probably the place of origin of the basis of the chronicle "of Nestor", now usually known as the Primary Chronicle, the earliest source for the beginnings of Russian history.

There is the great monastery of Pochaev in Volhynia; of Valaam on an island in Lake Ladoga; and away in the far north on another island in the White Sea, is Solovetsky which has the distinction of having been bombarded by an English ship during the Crimean War. The cannon balls are still to be seen there.

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Athos they respected the privileges of the monks in return for a substantial tribute. Athos suffered severely when the Turks occupied it during the Greek War of Independence; and still more in 1861 when Prince Cuza confiscated the vast estates in Rumania which pious benefactors in the past had bestowed upon the monasteries. Some indemnity was offered but the monks regarded the whole transaction as purely illegal, and refused it. The loss to them was an income of £120,000 a year, which meant the severe impoverishment of fourteen of the richest monasteries. These were Greek, and one effect was to tilt the balance in favour of the Russians in the perennial rivalry and friction which has existed between Russians and Greeks in the history of the Holy Mountain. But the turn of the Russians was to come, and the Russian Revolution has left the Russian monks on Athos almost entirely destitute.

The Greek census of 1928 gave the total number of monks on Athos as 4,858, rather less than half of whom reside within the walls of the monasteries. The monasteries are all fortified, and grouped among the luxuriant foliage they provide a picture of great beauty. The typical monastery surrounds a courtyard in the centre of which is the church and at one end the refectory. A fountain stands between them. The surrounding walls enclose on the ground floor store rooms and offices, and the monks' living quarters in the two or three stories above. The walls are castellated and may have projecting wooden galleries. In one corner is the keep, now generally converted into a library. The monastic libraries are rich in manuscripts and other documents which, even after the losses incurred during the Greek War of Independence, and by fire and neglect, are of great value to the political, ecclesiastical and social historian, and Athos is a store house of treasures of Byzantine art.

The monks spend their time for the most part in religious exercises. Otherwise they occupy themselves with agriculture, fishing and handicrafts.

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The ideal of the Orthodox monk is to glorify God and to save his own soul by a life of prayer and mortification. They all follow with greater or less strictness the system of St. Basil. There is nothing to correspond with the variety of Orders and

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Congregations which have developed in the West. The Orthodox monks do not fail in the duty of showing charity to the poor, and hospitality to the traveller. Benevolent institutions, such as schools and hospitals, may be attached to a monastery, in the sense that they are supported by funds provided by it, but not in the sense that the monks themselves give personal service in them. The fulfilment of an apostolate to the world is no part of the primary purpose of the Orthodox in embracing the monastic life. An exception is provided by many of the monks of mediaeval Russia. Here too it may be true that their first object in pushing their settlements ever further into the remote and barbarous districts to the north and east, was to escape from the world and secure that solitude in which the contemplative life can thrive. But it is to their honour that when so placed they were not deaf to the call of the world around them. These Russian monastic settlements were lights shining in the darkness and became civilizing and evangelizing agencies of incalculable worth among the peoples of the steppes and the tundras.

Nor must the intellectual and artistic activities of the religious houses of Orthodoxy be overlooked. The work of their copyists has saved the contents of many an ancient manuscript from being lost to posterity. Religious literature has been enriched by the original writings of Orthodox monks on theology, mysticism, prayer and the ascetic life, and they compiled many lives of the saints.

The religious poetry which figures so prominently in Orthodox forms of worship is largely the work of monks. Much of it is of great beauty and some few instances have been translated and established themselves in the hymn books of the West.[1]

Side by side with this is the work of the painter monks who created a whole world of beauty and spirituality of their own in the production of icons and the frescoing of the walls of churches, while the delicate labours of the miniaturist and illuminator of manuscripts have made something precious for the rest of the world.

[1] See Chapter VIII.